

Message Text

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ACTION EUR-12

INFO OCT-01 NEA-10 ISO-00 IO-13 ACDA-07 CIAE-00 DODE-00

NSAE-00 NSCE-00 SSO-00 USIE-00 INRE-00 PM-04 H-02

INR-07 L-03 NSC-05 PA-01 PRS-01 SP-02 SS-15 SAB-01

SSM-03 (ISO) W

----- 064632

O P 250920Z MAY 76

FM AMEMBASSY PARIS

TO SECSTATE WASHDC IMMEDIATE 1260

INFO AMEMBASSY BEIRUT PRIORITY

AMEMBASSY CAIRO PRIORITY

AMEMBASSY DAMASCUS PRIORITY

AMEMBASSY AMMAN PRIORITY

AMEMBASSY TEL AVIV PRIORITY

AMEMBASSY LONDON PRIORITY

AMEMBASSY MOSCOW PRIORITY

AMEMBASSY KUWAIT PRIORITY

AMEMBASSY JIDDA PRIORITY

USMISSION USUN PRIORITY

C O N F I D E N T I A L SECTION 01 OF 02 PARIS 15354

E.O. 11652: GDS

TAGS: PFOR, LE, FR, XF, MILI

SUBJECT: FRANCE AND LEBANON

REFS: (A) PARIS 14822; (B) PARIS 14432

1. IN WAKE OF THE CRITICISM COMING FROM BOTH OPPOSITION AND MAJORITY SPOKESMEN IN FRANCE AND SEVERAL LEBANESE POLITICAL FIGURES AND A NUMBER OF ARAB GOVERNMENTS OF GISCARD'S NEW ORLEANS PROPOSAL TO SEND FRENCH TROOPS TO LEBANON, THE ELYSEE SPOKESMAN TRIED ON MAY 24 TO LIMIT THE IMPORTANCE OF THE PRESIDENT'S SUGGESTION. HE SAID GISCARD'S STATEMENTS WERE NOT REALLY NEW AND THAT THEY REPRESENTED SIMPLY A REPETITION OF WHAT GEORGES GORSE
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UPON HIS RETURN FROM LEBANON AND GISCARD HIMSELF BEFORE

THE NATIONAL PRESS CLUB HAD ALREADY SAID.

2. "WHAT HAS BEEN SAID ON SEVERAL OCCASIONS IS THAT FRANCE IS READY FOR AN ACTION IN FAVOR OF PEACE AND SECURITY IN LEBANON, BUT IT HAS ALWAYS BEEN UNDERSTOOD THAT SUCH AN ACTION COULD ONLY BE ENVISAGED AT THE REQUEST OF LEBANESE LEGAL AUTHORITIES". THE SPOKESMAN SAID IT HAD ALWAYS BEEN MERELY A QUESTION OF AN EVENTUAL OPERATION TOWARD CONSOLIDATING A PEACEFUL SITUATION AND THAT SUCH AN OPERATION HAD ALWAYS BEEN ENVISAGED FOR A LIMITED PERIOD.

3. OUR SOUNDINGS AT THE QUAI AND ELSEWHERE INDICATE THAT GISCARD'S NEW ORLEANS REMARKS CAME AS A GREAT SURPRISE TO THE FRENCH MIDDLE EAST ESTABLISHMENT. QUAI DEPUTY DIRECTOR FOR THE LEVANT, HENRI SERVANT, ADMITTED AS MUCH AND REPEATEDLY EMPHASIZED TO VISITING DEPARTMENT OFFICER AND EMBOFF ON MAY 24 THE TWO CONDITIONS GISCARD MENTIONED: A REQUEST FROM THE LEBANESE GOVERNMENT, ESPECIALLY FROM SARKIS WHEN HE ASSUMES HIS PRESIDENTIAL RESPONSIBILITIES, AND THE FAVORABLE CONSENSUS OF ALL THE LEBANESE FACTIONS AND ARAB GOVERNMENTS FOR SUCH A MOVE. WHILE SERVANT WAS HESITANT TO AGREE THAT GISCARD'S ANNOUNCEMENT WAS INTENDED PRIMARILY TO SILENCE GAULLIST CRITICS OF HIS "DO NOTHING" POLICY IN LEBANON, AN OFFICIAL IN THE QUAI POLICY PLANNING STAFF OPENLY ACKNOWLEDGED THAT DOMESTIC POLITICAL REASONS WERE BEHIND GISCARD'S PROPOSAL. BEYOND WISHING TO RESPOND TO GAULLIST CRITICISMS, GISCARD, IN THE VIEW OF A FRENCH SOCIALIST PARTY ME EXPERT, ALSO DESIRED TO INFLUENCE THE CURRENT BUDGET DEBATE ON NATIONAL DEFENSE IN THE NATIONAL ASSEMBLY BY DEMONSTRATING THE NECESSITY FOR AN EFFECTIVE FRENCH INTERVENTION FORCE.

COMMENT: IT SEEMS CLEAR TO US THAT GISCARD'S ANNOUNCEMENT WHILE IN THE UNITED STATES TOOK MOST FRENCHMEN BY SURPRISE. IT MAY, AS ONE SOURCE

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O P 250920Z MAY 76

FM AMEMBASSY PARIS

TO SECSTATE WASHDC IMMEDIATE 1261

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AMEMBASSY CAIRO PRIORITY

AMEMBASSY DAMASCUS PRIORITY

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SUGGESTED, RESULT FROM A LACK OF COMMUNICATION BETWEEN THE QUAI AND THE ELYSEE. AS A RESULT OF THE GORSE MISSION, THE QUAI HAD REACHED THE CONCLUSION THAT EVENTUALLY FRENCH PARTICIPATION IN A SECURITY CONTROL SYSTEM UNDER SOME KIND OF MULTINATIONAL AUSPICES MIGHT BE POSSIBLE. THIS, HOWEVER, COULD ONLY BE ACHIEVED AFTER A NEW GORSE OR COUVE MISSION TO SARKIS HAD CONFIRMED THE DESIRE OF SARKIS AND ALL OTHER INTERESTED PARTIES FOR SUCH A SECURITY CONTROL SYSTEM. ACCORDING TO THIS THEORY, GISCARD CHOSE TO FORGET THE CAVEATS AND TO MOVE AHEAD ON A PLAN WHICH HE ALMOST ALONE IN THE FRENCH GOVERNMENT THOUGHT WOULD BE CONFIDENTIAL

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WORKABLE.

4. WE BELIEVE THE PRESIDENT'S DESIRE TO RESPOND TO PRESSURES FOR A FRENCH INITIATIVE IN LEBANON FROM MEMBERS OF THE MAJORITY IS A BETTER, ALTHOUGH STILL ONLY PARTIALLY SATISFACTORY, EXPLANATION. BY MAKING THIS OFFER, GISCARD TOOK THE WIND OUT OF THE SAILS OF HIS GAULLIST CRITICS AND RISKED LITTLE, SINCE THE CONDITIONS HE POSED FOR SENDING A FRENCH FORCE CLEARLY COULD NOT BE FULFILLED. BUT THE DEGREE OF

DOMESTIC AND FOREIGN DENUNCIATION OF GISCARD'S PROPOSAL
SEEMS TO HAVE BEEN GREATER THAN HE ANTICIPATED. THUS
WHILE DOING NOTHING TO RELIEVE TENSIONS IN LEBANON,
GISCARD MAY HAVE HURT HIMSELF AT HOME AND ADDED
ANOTHER NAIL TO THE COFFIN OF REAL FRENCH INFLUENCE
IN THE LEVANT. WHILE PRESS SUGGESTIONS THAT THE U.S.
GAVE ITS STAMP OF APPROVAL TO GISCARD'S ANNOUNCEMENT
MAY NOT BE HELPFUL TO U.S. EFFORTS IN THE NEAR EAST,
THEY ARE NOT TAKEN SERIOUSLY BY MOST FRENCHMEN WHO
FOLLOW THE SITUATION THERE CLOSELY.
GAMMON

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